



Geary County

K-STATE RESEARCH AND EXTENSION NEWS

Families Together

November 2022

geary.k-state.edu

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Ask the Agent

Q: Our spare room is in the basement of our house. It is cooler down there and I would like to put a heated blanket on the bed for our holiday company. Do I need to worry about that being a fire hazard?

A: No doubt, a heated blanket will take the edge off sleeping in a cool room.

While house fires related to heated blankets are a minimal threat, comprising only .04% of the causes of all house fires in the U.S., the term “safety first” still applies.

At the very least, consider purchasing a heated blanket that has an automatic turn-off feature. Check out the article inside this newsletter for more information from ESFI—Electrical Safety Foundation International organization.

For more information call the Geary County K-State Research & Extension office at:
785-238-4161

For many, thoughts of Thanksgiving bring to mind turkey, pumpkin pie, collards and sweet potato pie. But there is so much more to the American celebration than the food.



In contemporary America, Thanksgiving is associated with gatherings. There are community meals that offer fellowship and service, people lined up on the curbs of main street awaiting the bands and balloons of a holiday parade, and social parties where people gather to celebrate friends and family.

The Thanksgiving meals served in our homes bring together family members that may have not seen each other for months, if not years. And the benefits of this celebration are far reaching:

- **Better family relationships.** Mealtime provides an opportunity for the whole family to be together. Use your time together to talk about recent events, catch up, and simply spend time with each other.
- **Builds bonds.** Shared meals bring people together, build community, and create a sense of belonging.
- **Community-building.** Since early times of social development, gathering, preparing, and sharing food has been a pillar of community-building.

How can you get the most out of your shared Thanksgiving meals? First, remember your goal is to carve out quality time to spend together and then:

- **Keep it simple.** Thanksgiving meals don't have to be elaborate. Stick to recipes that you are comfortable with that your family enjoys.
- **Get the family involved.** Ask members of the family to bring their favorite dish so that you aren't left with all the meal preparation. Let your kids help plan for meals, including creating shopping lists, cooking, setting the table, and helping clean up.
- **Make it enjoyable.** Family meals are for nourishment, comfort, and support. Leave the serious discussions for another time.
- **Make it screen-free.** For those football enthusiasts out there, this might be a tough one. However, the meal itself won't take that long but the benefits of sharing time at the dinner table can be lifelong. Agree that mealtime is for listening and sharing family stories. Leave phones on mute and out of reach and turn off the TVs to keep family in focus.



For more resources to make your family Thanksgiving dinner memorable and fun, check out the Family Dinner Project at: <https://thefamilydinnerproject.org/thanksgiving/>

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Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

Food & Nutrition

Holiday Food Preparation

A potato is a potato is a potato...right?

Maybe not, says Kansas State University food scientist Karen Blakeslee.

"If you taste a whole vegetable, such as a baked sweet potato, compared to slices of sweet potato that are baked, you'll have two different foods," said Blakeslee, who is also coordinator of the university's [Rapid Response Center for food science](#).

"Cutting the vegetable opens up the cell structure to allow the natural sugars and proteins to interact with the heat," she said. "Taste the sweet potatoes side-by-side and you will pick up different flavor compounds."

Cutting vegetables to roast or bake can "take flavor to another level," according to Blakeslee, because of a concept known as the *Maillard reaction*.

"The *Maillard reaction* is a non-enzymatic reaction between amino acids (that make up proteins) and reducing sugars (such as glucose and fructose) in the presence of heat," Blakeslee said.

"In some cases, it is a desirable reaction, such as browning meat or baked bread, or roasted coffee beans. But in other cases, it is detrimental – such as in dry milk powder if it is stored improperly. It's not the same as caramelization, which is a thermal decomposition of certain sugars in food (such as making caramel candy)."

Vegetables can be tasty regardless of the way consumers prepare them, Blakeslee said; it's just a matter of preference.

"Try different ways to prepare and cook vegetables," she said. "From baking, roasting, sautéing and more, the preparation can add a lot of variety to any meal."

She adds: "Using different preparation methods can take a once-hated vegetable to a favorite vegetable."

Blakeslee publishes a monthly newsletter called [You Asked It!](#) that provides numerous tips on being safe and healthy. More information is also available from [local extension offices](#) in Kansas.

*By Pat Melgares, K-State Research and Extension news service
MANHATTAN, Kansas*

Thanksgiving Day Count-Down...

It is important to have a schedule for all the preparation that will take place before your Thanksgiving meal. Below are a few considerations:

- ⇒ The turkey will need time to thaw, and a good rule to follow is 24 hours for each 5 pounds. The safest way to thaw a turkey is in the refrigerator, and it will need to be on a platter or tray on the lowest shelf to catch any liquid as the turkey thaws. You can find more food safety tips for handling the Thanksgiving turkey at Extension Bulletin #4213 Food Safety Facts: Helpful Hints on Handling Turkeys for Thanksgiving.
- ⇒ Make sure to reach out to guests at least two days before Thanksgiving to remind them to bring their special dishes to share.
- ⇒ A day or two before Thanksgiving, you can make any side dishes that are not being brought by guests. You can plan to reheat these dishes while

the turkey is in its final stage of cooking. The table can be set, check for serving dishes, and create a checklist making sure you have done all of your planning and preparations.

It's here! The big day with your guests! Be sure to review your checklist, and depending on the weight of the turkey and if it is stuffed or not, roasting times can vary. Refer to the table below as a guide for roasting your turkey.

The mashed potatoes can be cooked and mashed while the turkey cooks. The side dishes and stuffing can be reheated while the turkey is being finished as well. Try including younger guests by having them help with the preparation process, set the table, or put out side dishes close to serving time. Guests with their side dishes will eventually arrive, so be sure to keep their hot dishes hot and cold dishes cold until serving time. Now it's time to sit down and enjoy your meal!

Roasting Times

Weight of Turkey (lbs)	Unstuffed Cooking Time (Hours)	Stuffed Cooking Time (Hours)
8 to 12	2 3/4 to 3	3 to 3 1/2
12 to 14	3 to 3 1/4	3 1/2 to 4
14 to 18	3 3/4 to 4 1/4	4 to 4 1/4
18 to 20	4 1/4 to 4 1/2	4 1/4 to 4 3/4
20 to 24	4 1/2 to 5	4 3/4 to 5 1/4

Leftover turkey? Make sure the turkey gets put in shallow containers and place in the refrigerator no later than 2 hours after removing it from the oven. You don't want the leftovers to go to waste! Turkey can stretch into many family favorite tasty meals. Check out this blog post from the University of Maine Cooperative Extension Service for recipe ideas:

<https://extension.umaine.edu/food-health/2021/11/04/10-recipes-to-use-your-leftover-turkey/>

The following information is provided by the Electric Safety Foundation International. ESFI is a non-profit organization dedicated exclusively to promoting electrical safety at home and in the workplace.



Heating Pads and Electric Blankets Safety

Heating pads and electric blankets cause almost 500 fires each year. Almost all of these fires involve electric blankets that are more than ten years old. There are two types of personal heating appliances, heating pads that are placed directly on the mattress and electric blankets. They are not meant to be used interchangeably or at the same time.

Safety Tips:

- Look for dark, charred, or frayed spots or one where the electric cord is cracked or frayed. Replace any worn or old heating pad or electric blanket.
- Do not allow anything on top of a heating pad or electric blanket when it is in use. When covered by anything, including other blankets or pets, electric blankets may overheat.
- Never fold electric blankets when in use. Folded or tucked in blankets could overheat and cause a fire.

Heating appliances should never be left unattended or used while sleeping.

Winter Weather Electricity Safety

With the severe weather characteristic of winter comes the threat of electrical hazards caused by downed power lines, power outages, and coastal flooding. ESFI (Electric Safety Foundation International) is cautioning the public that electrical dangers associated with downed power lines, portable generators, and submerged electrical equipment can still cause injuries and deaths once a snow or ice storm has ended. Further, danger can also arise from the use of supplemental heating sources such as space heaters.

ESFI recommends taking the following electrical safety precautions during winter storms:

Downed Power Lines

- Always assume fallen power lines are energized. Stay at least 10 feet away from a downed power line and any nearby objects it may be touching, such as a fence or a tree limb.
- Contact your utility company immediately to report downed power lines outside your home.
- Never touch a person or object that is in direct or indirect contact with a downed power line. Instead, call 911 immediately.

- Never attempt to move a downed power line – leave it to the professionals.

Portable Generators

- Do not operate a portable generator in your home, basement, or garage. Generators can very quickly produce high levels of carbon monoxide, which can be deadly.
- Be sure that the generator is used with a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) to help prevent electrocutions and electrical shock injuries.
- Do not connect generators directly to the household wiring without an appropriate transfer switch installed. Power from generators connected directly to household wiring can backfeed along power lines and electrocute anyone coming in contact with them, including utility lineworkers making repairs.
- Make sure that there is at least one working carbon monoxide detector in your home. Test the batteries at least twice a year, at the same time smoke detector batteries are tested.

Space Heaters

- Make sure your space heater has the label showing that it is listed by a recognized testing laboratory.
- Before using any space heater, read the manufacturer's instructions and warning labels carefully.
- Inspect heaters for cracked or broken plugs or loose connections before each use. If frayed, worn, or damaged, do not use the heater.
- Never leave a space heater unattended. Turn it off when you're leaving a room or going to sleep, and don't let pets or children play too close to a space heater.
- Space heaters are only meant to provide supplemental heat and should never be used to warm bedding, cook food, dry clothing, or thaw pipes.
- Proper placement of space heaters is critical. Heaters must be kept at least three feet away from anything that can burn, including papers, clothing, and rugs.
- Locate space heaters out of high traffic areas and doorways where they may pose a tripping hazard.
- Plug space heaters directly into a wall outlet. Do not use an extension cord or power strip, which could overheat and result in a fire. Do not plug any other electrical devices into the same outlet as the heater.
- Place space heaters on level, flat surfaces. Never place heaters on cabinets, tables, furniture, or carpet, which can overheat and start a fire. Always unplug and safely store the heater when it is not in use.

Source: <https://www.esfi.org/heating-pads-and-electric-blankets-safety/>
Extracted 11/17/2022

Geary County

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Upcoming Geary County Extension Programs

****Requires pre-registration. Call 238-4161 to pre-register****

November

24 & 25 Office Closed for Thanksgiving Holiday

28 Welcome Kyler Langvardt!!! Kyler is joining the Geary County K-State Research & Extension Team as our new Ag and Natural Resources Agent. His first few months will be filled with trainings and meet and greet opportunities. Drop by our office to say "hi" or send him a note of welcome!

December

7 Medicare Open Enrollment ends. Deb has packed her appointment calendar, but you can call to see if there have been any cancellations if you would like to review your Medicare Prescription plan options!

26 & 27 Office Closed for Christmas Holiday. Limited staff can assist you December 28-30. Enjoy the holiday season with your family & friends!



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